

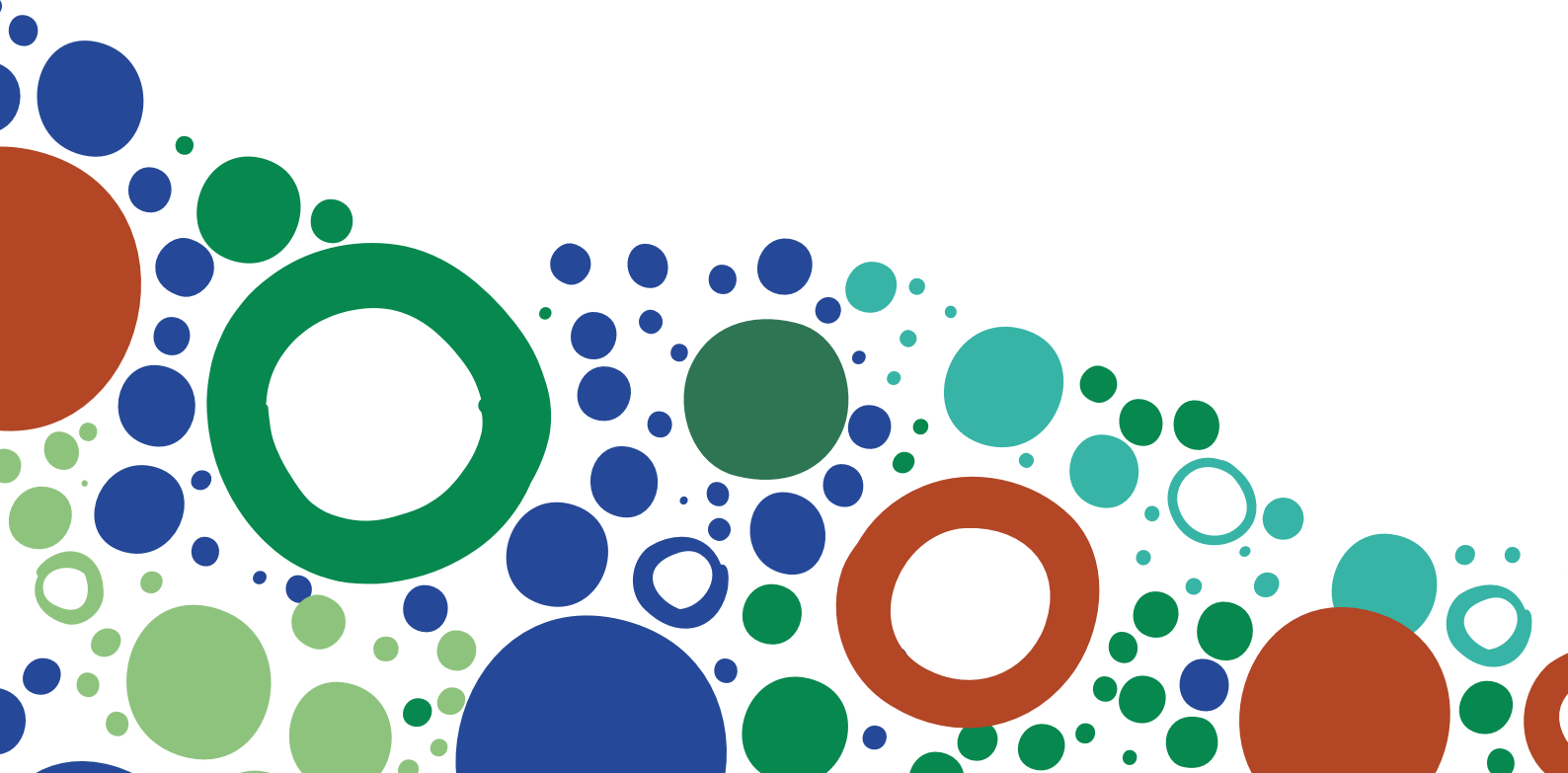


**Mental Health Commission**  
Office of **Alcohol and Other Drugs**

**Strengthening Alcohol and Other Drugs  
Governance in Western Australia**

# **Annual progress report**

**1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025**



## Acknowledgement of country

The Mental Health Commission acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of this country and its waters. The Mental Health Commission wishes to pay its respects to Elders past and present and extend this to all Aboriginal people seeing this message.

## About this report

This report provides an overview of Mental Health Commission (Commission) progress against the Strengthening Alcohol and Other Drugs Governance Implementation Plan.

Reporting against the Implementation Plan supports transparency and accountability to Government, the alcohol and other drugs sector, and broader community on the effort dedicated to elevating the focus on alcohol and other drugs since the inception of the Office of Alcohol and Other Drugs in July 2024.

**The key achievements highlighted within this report reflect collective actions by the Commission and other key government and non-government partners.**

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### **This resource was prepared by:**

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### **Feedback**

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## Recognition of Lived Experience

We recognise the individual and collective expertise of those with living and lived experience of mental health and alcohol and other drug issues, including their families and carers.

# Commitment to reform

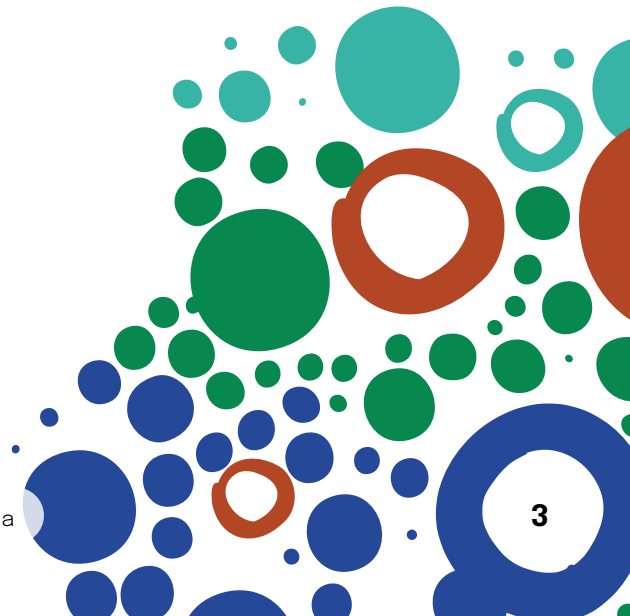
**In 2024, the State Government announced a package of reforms to strengthen leadership, accountability and collaboration to accelerate and sustain action to prevent and reduce harms from alcohol and other drugs in the Western Australian community.**

The reforms responded to the Independent Review of the WA Health System Governance (Governance Review) and were informed by an Alcohol and Other Drugs Governance Working Group (Working Group) which consisted of peak body, sector and consumer representatives, as well as representatives from the Mental Health Commission (Commission) and Department of Health.

The Working Group considered strategies to elevate alcohol and other drugs aligned to an agreed set of guiding principles which reflected the desired future state of alcohol and other drugs governance in Western Australia.

The Commission was tasked with leading internal, sector and system-wide reform in partnership with key stakeholders to deliver on the principles. Based on the Working Group's guidance, the [Strengthening Alcohol and Other Drugs Governance in Western Australia Implementation Plan](#) (Implementation Plan) was developed and released in May 2024.

This report summarises key achievements from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025 against the Implementation Plan.



## Guiding principles for strengthening alcohol and other drugs governance in Western Australia



**1. Dedicated domain** for the alcohol and other drugs system, with sustainable, accountable, transparent and impactful leadership.



**4. Alcohol and other drugs expertise**, and capability to translate evidence into policy and systems and services planning.



**2. System-wide leadership and strategic coordination** of alcohol and other drugs strategies and services within the wider system, including prevention, early intervention, harm reduction, treatment and support.



**5. Capacity to partner with the sector and consumers** to achieve best system and service outcomes for the community.

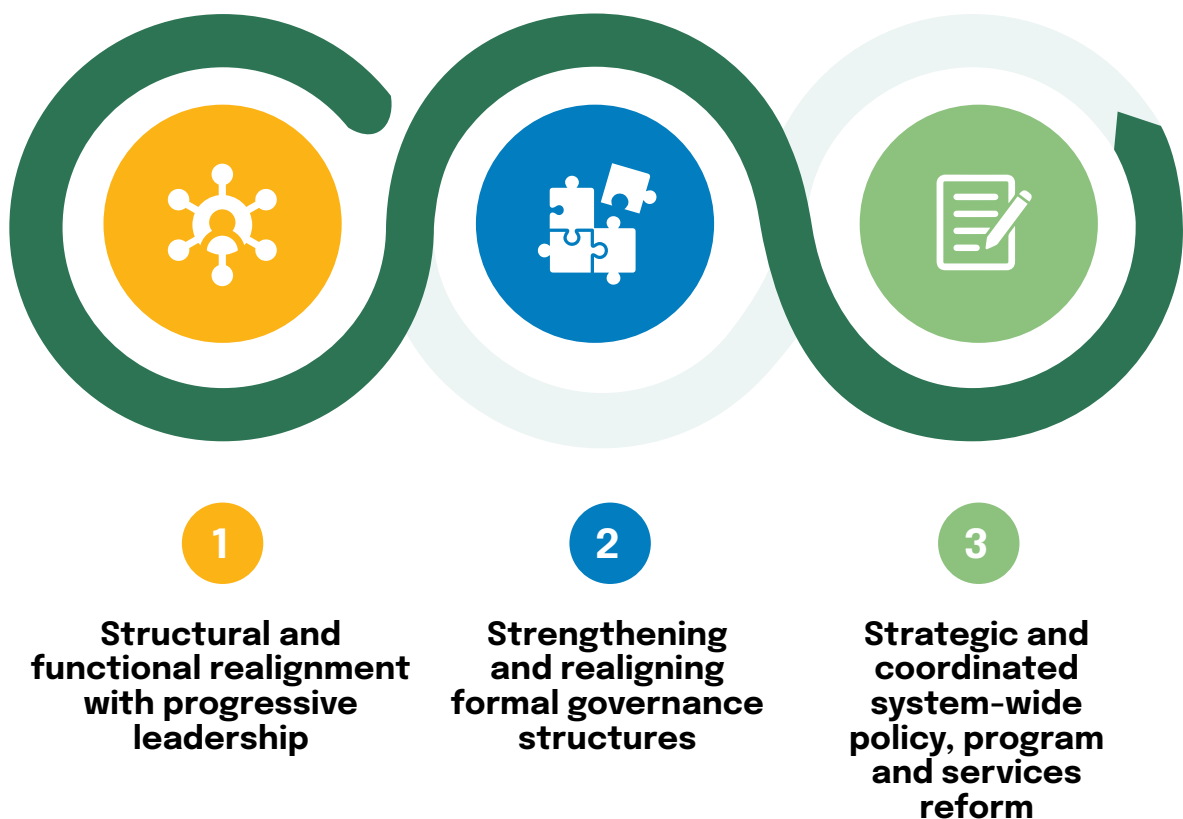


**3. 'Alcohol and other drugs' being in the title** of the government body responsible for alcohol and other drugs governance.

# About the Implementation Plan

While progress against the Implementation Plan is led by the Commission, many of the strategies reflect a shared commitment to actions and ways of working that require the collective effort of many government and non-government partners.

**Strategies in the Implementation Plan are aligned to three overarching pillars.**





### Structural and functional realignment with progressive leadership

**Structural and functional alignment and enduring leadership are fundamental enablers to delivering the Government's commitment to elevating the focus on alcohol and other drugs within the Commission and the broader health system.**

Strategies within this pillar are primarily internally facing at the

Commission. The actions relate to realigning business structures and functions to facilitate increased alcohol and other drugs focus, expertise, coordination and accountability. The strategies also support sustainable and progressive leadership within the organisation.



### Strengthening and realigning formal governance structures

**Governance provides the framework for decision making and accountability. To elevate alcohol and other drugs across systems and ensure a shared commitment to meaningful action, governance arrangements must be established at the right levels and with the right expertise, to provide strategic oversight, drive progress against priorities and enable informed decision-making.**

Actions within this pillar reflect the Commission's commitment to strengthening governance arrangements at the local, state and national levels. This will ensure alcohol and other drugs remain on the agenda and create opportunities to advance strategic priorities.



### Strategic and coordinated system-wide policy, program and services reform

**Improving alcohol and other drug related outcomes for people, families and communities across Western Australia requires system-wide leadership that drives evidence-based and person-centred policy, program and services reforms.**

Actions within this pillar reflect initial commitments to strengthen the

Commission's approach to strategic policy and provide direction with respect to coordinating efforts, partnerships and investments. This includes development of key overarching guiding documents for Western Australia which identify whole-of-system alcohol and other drug priorities, and implementation of the Commission's Agency Commissioning Plan.

**Specific strategies associated with each pillar are provided overleaf.**

# Implementation plan progress

**In this section, a snapshot of progress for the period 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025 is provided against the strategies.**

All 17 strategies are either in progress or complete. Examples of actions are provided within the next section of this report.



## 1.0 Structural and functional realignment with progressive leadership

		Guiding Principles	Progress
1.1	Establish an Office of Alcohol and Other Drugs with dedicated responsibilities for alcohol and other drugs policy and strategy	1 2 3 4	Complete
1.2	Develop an official Government logo for use in association with the Office of Alcohol and Other Drugs	3	Complete
1.3	Formalise Senior Executive Service positions to lead the Office of Alcohol and Other Drugs	1 2	Complete
1.4	Establish the Assistant Commissioner for Alcohol and Other Drugs as an independent advisor to the Mental Health Commissioner	1 2 4	Complete
1.5	Review key performance indicators and operating targets to improve transparency and accountability	1 2	In progress
1.6	Strengthen internal performance, monitoring and evaluation functions to improve oversight of alcohol and other drugs system performance	1 2 4	Complete*
1.7	Build a skilled and competent internal workforce with subject matter expertise in alcohol and other drugs to support organisational capacity and capability	1 2 4 5	In progress

\* Marked as complete, noting revised ways of working that involve continuous monitoring and improvement have been incorporated into business as usual functions.



## 2.0 Strengthening and realigning formal governance arrangements

		Guiding Principles	Progress
2.1	Strengthen interagency, sector and community coordination, engagement, and collaboration through the Office of Alcohol and Other Drugs and agency-wide ways of working	1 2 4 5	In progress
2.2	Ensure new mental health and alcohol and other drugs governance arrangements include specific expertise and strategic focus	1 2 4 5	Complete
2.3	Consider other state-based governance arrangements to identify opportunities to elevate the alcohol and other drugs strategic agenda	1 2 4 5	In progress
2.4	Strengthen the Alcohol and Other Drugs Advisory Board	1 2 4 5	In progress
2.5	Advocate to reinstate progressive and accountable national alcohol and other drugs governance mechanisms	1 2 4 5	In progress



### 3.0 Strategic and coordinated system-wide policy, program and services reform

		Guiding Principles	Progress
<b>3.1</b>	Develop a five-year, system-wide Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategy to commence in 2025 (the Strategy)	1 2 4 5	In progress
<b>3.2</b>	Develop a system-wide mental health and alcohol and other drugs Outcomes Measurement Framework	1 2 4 5	In progress
<b>3.3</b>	Develop dedicated alcohol and other drugs interagency framework in alignment with the Strategy	1 2 4 5	In progress
<b>3.4</b>	Facilitate and translate research and evidence into policy, strategy, and systems and services planning through engagement with tertiary organisations and local, national and international experts	1 2 4	In progress
<b>3.5</b>	Adhere to the principles outlined in the Commission's Agency Commissioning Plan	2 4 5	In progress



# Key achievements

*While not an exhaustive list, the below examples showcase progress towards the delivery of the Implementation Plan.*



## Structural and functional realignment with progressive leadership

### Establishment of the Office of Alcohol and other Drugs

The Office of Alcohol and Other Drugs (the Office) was established on 1 July 2024 within the Commission to provide a dedicated focus for alcohol and other drugs strategic policy and system reform.

The Office is responsible for influencing and strengthening action to address alcohol and other drug issues across Western Australia.

In practice, this means working with and across governments and sectors, researchers and communities, to identify system and service gaps, and develop coordinated and evidence-informed responses to support people across Western Australia to live healthy and fulfilling lives.



**Left to right:** Julia Knapton (Deputy Commissioner System Development), Naomi Henrickson (Director Office of Alcohol and Other Drugs), Maureen Lewis (Commissioner Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs)

The Office works collaboratively with other teams within the Commission who continue to deliver on alcohol and other drug priorities such as, but not limited to: Commissioning of prevention, treatment and community support services, strategic workforce development and delivery; engagement of lived and living experience; delivery of prevention and wellbeing programs and services; provision of Aboriginal policy and cultural governance; and systems performance, monitoring and evaluation.

The Office has 11 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff (five new and six realigned from within existing Commission resources) with experience in alcohol and other drugs prevention and health promotion, strategic policy, legislation, research, and services planning and program delivery. The Office is located within the System Development Division.

The establishment of the Office sits alongside other key strategies in the Implementation Plan that collectively intend to deliver reform.

Elevating the focus on alcohol and other drugs and driving positive change is a collective responsibility. Ongoing alcohol and other drugs related work across the Commission, within the sector and across government continues to be vital to making a difference in the community.

### **Assistant Commissioner for Alcohol and Other Drugs**

To strengthen leadership in the alcohol and other drugs and mental health systems, the Commission established four new Assistant Commissioner roles to provide strategic and expert advice to inform system-wide reform in the areas of alcohol and other drugs, lived experience (consumer; significant other) and Aboriginal affairs.

Dr Stephen Bright commenced in his role as Assistant Commissioner for Alcohol and Other Drugs on 1 July 2024.

Dr Bright works collaboratively with the Commission's leadership groups and within formal governance structures to advise on future policy and strategy direction for Western Australia. Dr Bright is the Co-Chair of the Lived Experience Advisory Group and provides strategic advice to the health systems senior decision makers through his membership on the Mental Health, Wellbeing and Alcohol and Other Drugs Joint Leadership Group.

With extensive alcohol and other drugs clinical and academic experience, Dr Bright also provides the Commission with dedicated expertise and assists in building internal organisational capacity and capability.

### Building a skilled and competent workforce

#### Supporting the development of alcohol and other drug expertise

In support of building a passionate and connected workforce with expertise in alcohol and other drugs, the Commission supported the Western Australian Alcohol and other Drug Conference 2025, hosted by Western Australian Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies in partnership with Hope Community Services, and the National Drug Research Institute Symposium, *Challenges and Opportunities: Reducing Alcohol and Other Drug-related Harm in 2025 and Beyond*.

Hosted consecutively over three days, the events brought together experienced alcohol and other drug professionals, service users, world leading researchers and academics, students, and representatives of the not-for-profit and government sectors to learn about latest developments in alcohol and other drug research, service and policy development and delivery.

The Commission acknowledges the abundance of passionate, skilled and experienced professionals working in the alcohol and other drugs sector. Those participating in these events and the willingness to share knowledge and insights has contributed to building collective capacity to prevent and reduce harm from alcohol and other drugs in our communities.

### Building lived experience workforce capability

Lived and living experience and leadership contributed to the foundations of the alcohol and other drugs sector in Western Australia and continues to be embedded in the evolution and responsiveness of the sector to community needs.

As part of our commitment to building internal workforce capability, the Commission is leading an internal Organisational Readiness Project which aims to ensure the Commission has the right tools, strategies and frameworks in place for sustainable, inclusive, and sector-informed lived and living experience workforce. This aligns with key recommendations from the Governance Review.

### Supporting the design and delivery of a culturally secure alcohol and other drugs system

In May 2025, the Commission established an Aboriginal Policy and Cultural Governance team with responsibility for establishing and implementing mechanisms for strategic policy, cultural governance and development of culturally appropriate initiatives in collaboration with internal and external stakeholders. The Aboriginal Policy and Cultural Governance team will work alongside the Office and other key partners to support engagements for the design and delivery of a culturally secure alcohol and other drugs system that is responsive to the needs of Aboriginal communities across Western Australia.

### Supporting student placements

The Office hosted its first Bachelor of Health Science (addiction studies major and youth studies minor) student placement in the first half of 2025. Student placements help to facilitate a broad understanding of alcohol and other drugs activity across the spectrum on prevention, harm reduction and treatment and support across the Commission.

Student placements not only provide a valuable opportunity to support student learning and practical skills development but also enables cross-pollination of contemporary teachings and contributes towards fostering interest and awareness of career pathways in the alcohol and other drugs sector.

The Office looks forward to continuing to support student placements, including from other disciplines, as part of our ongoing commitment to promoting careers in alcohol and other drug related roles, and building a skilled and competent workforce.



**Left to right:** Sean Wood (Senior Policy Officer), Sharene Kocsis (Associate Director Aboriginal Policy and Cultural Governance), and Alicia King (Manager Aboriginal Policy).



### Strengthening and realigning formal governance structures

#### Putting alcohol and other drugs on the agenda

In 2024, [new system-wide governance arrangements](#) were established to support leadership, focus and collaboration on alcohol and other drug issues at the highest levels within the health system.

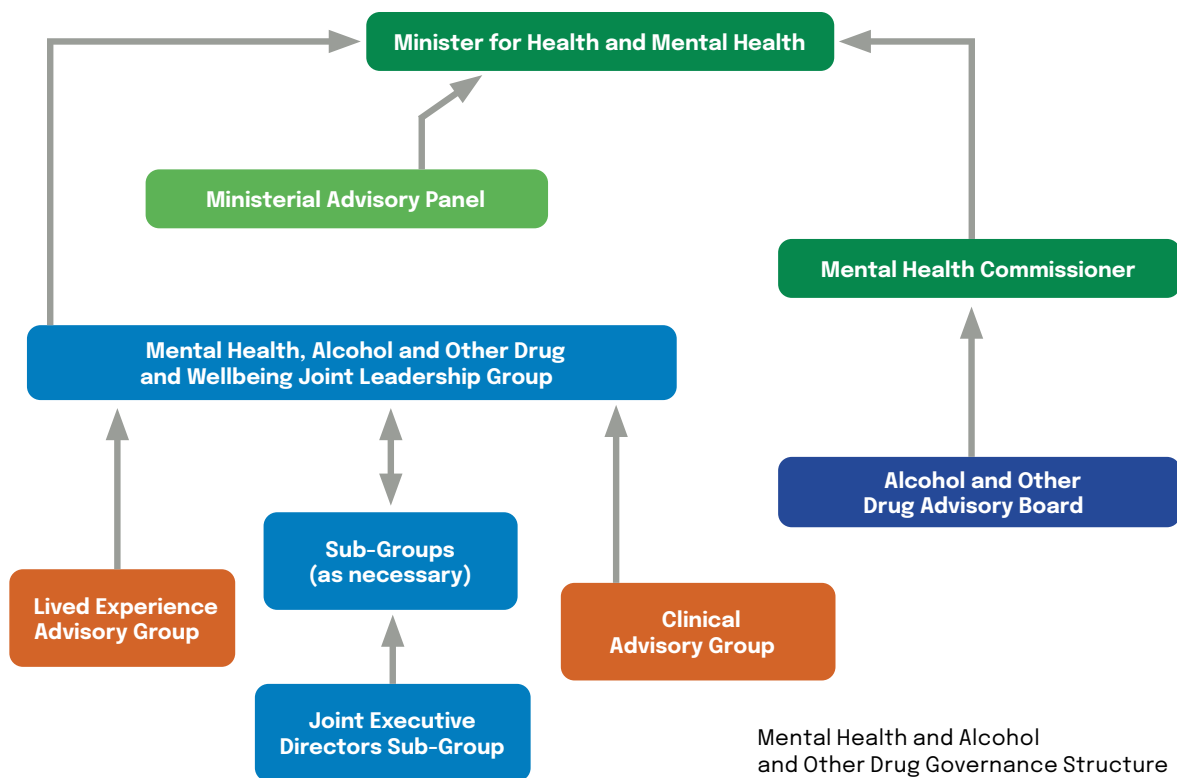
The Joint Leadership Group (JLG) brings together the Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Commissioner, Department of Health Director General and Health Service Provider Chief Executives to drive collective accountability of the alcohol and other drugs and mental health systems and support collaborative decision-making. The JLG are accountable to the Minister for Health; Mental Health for delivering strategic reform objectives.

The Joint Executive Directors (JED) Group is a sub-group of the JLG comprising Health Service Provider Executive Directors and was established to support decisions and actions as requested by JLG. The JLG is also supported by the Clinical Advisory Group (CAG) and the Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG). These groups inform decision making by providing contemporary and practical advice, based on clinical expertise and insights stemming from a lived and living experience and human rights lens.

The JLG, JED, CAG and LEAG all include a strategic focus on alcohol and other drugs with dedicated expertise to inform advice and decision making.

In alignment with the JLG's annual work plan, the Office has worked with JED to map alcohol and other drugs initiatives and services delivered across Western Australia's Health Service Providers to identify system gaps and opportunities. Immediate priorities which support integration and further establishment of alcohol and other drug services within public health settings will be considered by JLG later this year.

As part of the new system-wide governance arrangements, the Ministerial Advisory Panel (MAP) was established as an expert advisory and consultative body that provides direct feedback to the Minister for Health; Mental Health about system performance and reform progress. In 2024, the MAP considered the issue of developmentally appropriate alcohol and other drug responses, programs and services for children under the age of 12. Further consideration of this issue is anticipated outside of the MAP as part of consultation and engagement processes related to the development of the Western Australian Alcohol and Other Drugs Framework.



### Strengthening the Alcohol and Other Drugs Advisory Board

The Alcohol and Other Drugs Advisory Board (AODAB) is legislated under the *Alcohol and Other Drugs Act 1974* to provide independent and expert advice to the Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Commissioner on alcohol and other drugs issues.

AODAB members are appointed by the Minister for Mental Health, and endorsed by government due to their individual expertise that collectively contributes to contemporary and evidence-informed strategy, policy and services planning.

Since establishment of the Office, there has been dedicated effort to strengthen collaboration between the AODAB, the Office and other teams across the Commission to ensure strategic policy and planning initiatives are informed by expert advice and sector insights.

**In this reporting period, the AODAB has considered and provided advice to the Commissioner on a range of contemporary and emerging issues including:**

- strategies to combat stigma and discrimination;
- strategies to increase access to alcohol and other drug services, including via virtual care and for diverse communities;
- development of illicit drug early warning systems; and
- development of the Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategy 2025–2030.

The AODAB revised its Terms of Reference and processes to support their provision of considered advice. In addition, an external recruitment process was undertaken to expand AODAB membership to broaden expertise on responses to alcohol and other drug issues, with a first meeting of the expanded Board anticipated in November 2025.



**Left to right:** Alcohol and Other Drugs Board Advisory members, including Professor Steve Allsop (Chair); Ethan James; Nafiso Mohamed; Julia Stafford (Deputy Chair); Miriam Rudd.  
Missing: Commander Lawrence Panaia.

### Fostering collaborative partnerships

Establishing and strengthening new and existing partnerships with key stakeholders across the alcohol and other drugs sector has been a focus in this reporting period and will continue into the future.

Regular engagement has been established or built upon with a range of peak bodies and stakeholders including but not limited to: the Western Australian Network of Alcohol and Other Drugs; Alcohol and Other Drug Consumer and Community Coalition; government agencies other government and non-government service providers and community-based organisations; and researchers. This engagement is critical to ensuring the Office have a contemporary understanding of sector and stakeholder priorities and critical gaps, providing opportunity to work collaboratively to drive strategic reform in areas of common cause.

The Commission and the WA Primary Health Alliance continue to foster collaborative ways of working through formal mechanisms including via a Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs and Suicide Prevention Coordinating Group and a dedicated Alcohol and Other Drugs Working Sub-group, supporting collaboration on joint planning and commissioning.

Continuing to foster collaborative partnerships is a priority for the Office, in recognition of the strength in working together to improve the lives of individuals, families and the community.

### Collaborating across jurisdictions to progress alcohol and other drug policy reforms

#### Cross-jurisdictional collaboration and engagement

The Commission actively participates in the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Policy Officer Group (Group), a network of alcohol and other drugs senior policy officers from Australia and New Zealand government agencies that meet on a quarterly basis. The Group provides a forum for intergovernmental information sharing on current and emerging issues, as well as work being undertaken across jurisdictions with respect to alcohol and other drug programs, policy initiatives and research.

**In this reporting period, the Commission collaborated and sought information from the Group on a range of issues to help inform policy, system and services reform in Western Australia, including:**

- strategic approaches to address stigma and discrimination;
- opportunities to bolster harm reduction initiatives at the state and national level; and
- developmentally appropriate responses to alcohol and other drug use among children.

Additionally, the Commission and the National Indigenous Australians Agency continue to strengthen collaboration through bilateral meetings, to support working together on alcohol and other drug activity aligned to Closing the Gap and efforts to strengthen alcohol and other drug services for Aboriginal people in Western Australia. Regular engagement with the Commonwealth Department of Health, Disability and Ageing has also supported timely and productive contributions to national discussions relevant to the Western Australian context.

#### Advocating for national reform

In December 2024, the Office on behalf of the Commission, prepared a submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport (Committee) Inquiry into the health impacts of alcohol and other drugs in Australia. The submission centred on opportunities to strengthen state and national approaches to accelerate and sustain action to prevent and reduce harms from alcohol and other drugs. The submission highlighted the need to re-establish a dedicated national governance framework for alcohol and other drugs; develop a national approach to address stigma and discrimination and workforce development; and invest in strategies to better support national and jurisdictional service planning and evaluation.

In March 2025, ahead of the Federal Election, the Committee released an [Issues Paper](#) outlining the significant issues heard to date. The Committee noted it is clear from the evidence presented that the re-establishment of a national governing body is central to enhance Australia's response to alcohol and other drug issues and recommended public submissions and evidence received as part of the Inquiry be considered in future revisions to the National Drug Strategy.



### Strategic and coordinated system-wide policy, program and services reform

#### Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategy 2025-2030

In 2024, the State Government committed to the development of a new system-wide Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategy (Strategy) as part of a broader package of reforms to improve leadership, collaboration and coordination of the mental health and alcohol and other drugs systems.

The Strategy will be the new overarching guiding document for the state, across community, government, non-government and the private sector, setting the vision for the mental health and alcohol and other drugs systems, services and supports for the next five years.

Statewide consultation was undertaken in late 2024 to inform development of the Strategy. This involved dedicated

alcohol and other drugs workshops and engagement with people with lived and living experience, their families and significant others, service providers, peak bodies, government agencies and non-government organisations, individuals and communities. The Commission also partnered with a range of organisations, including the Alcohol and Other Drug Consumer and Community Coalition, Carers WA, Multicultural Services Centre of WA, and People With Disabilities WA to support targeted consultation with their communities in a variety of formats.

Informed by consultation and other evidence, the Strategy will outline the Aspirations, Strategic Pillars and Key Focus Areas for systems transformation over the next five years.



Mental health and alcohol and other drugs strategy community consultation, Northam, 18 November 2024

## **Outcomes Measurement Framework**

In support of the Strategy, the Commission has been working on an approach to outcomes measurement in consultation with the alcohol and other drugs and mental health sectors, including experts, service providers and people with lived experience. This work recognises that to achieve system transformation, progress against the new Strategy needs to be assessed beyond the implementation of actions, instead centring on outcomes for people, families and communities.

The development of an Outcomes Measurement Framework (OMF) will provide a structure to systematically monitor and report on mental health and alcohol and other drug system outcomes that matter most to people, their families and significant others in a consistent and transparent way.

In recognition of the uniqueness of each system, the OMF differentiates outcomes between the alcohol and other drugs and mental health systems. This will provide meaningful insights into how both systems are contributing to improved outcomes, as well as identifying areas that need to be strengthened.

Consultation will continue with the alcohol and other drugs sector and other critical stakeholders, including people with lived and living experience, as we progress towards finalising the OMF and implementation, as well as defining measurable, person-centred outcomes at the service level and for Aboriginal people in consultation with Aboriginal people.

## **Supporting place-based approaches**

The Commission recognises the importance of designing and delivering services and responses that are informed by and meet the needs, circumstances and contexts of individual communities.

To this end, the Commission is strengthening collaborative relationships to support place-based approaches to services planning and delivery, which includes membership on and engagement with regional-based governance groups such as Aboriginal Health Planning Forums.

In 2024, the Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service were funded to develop an Aboriginal-led Kimberley Alcohol and Other Drug Plan (Plan), that provides a roadmap for addressing the needs of Aboriginal people and communities in the Kimberley. The Plan is due for completion in 2026 and will provide important learnings and considerations regarding community-led, place-based approaches to services planning for the future.

In addition, the Commission facilitated the review of the Sobering Up Centre Service Model. With over 270 people engaged in the review process, including service providers, people who use the service, young people, Traditional Owner groups, Aboriginal Elders, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, representatives from frontline service providers and other health and government representatives, the findings are set to inform the development of contemporary, culturally appropriate and place-based service specifications that aim to meet the individual, cultural and community needs into the future.

### Working across government to progress evidence-based policy reform

The Office has dedicated effort to working across government and with other key partners to advance strategic policy issues to prevent and reduce harm from alcohol and other drugs.

#### Examples of key areas of focus in this reporting period include:

- examining the evidence-based best practice to prevent and reduce harm from illicit drugs in the context of music festivals and other events;
- considering the impacts and related policy options of nutritional and other health information on alcohol products; and
- options to support a reduction in family, domestic and sexual violence via changes to alcohol laws.

### Translating evidence into policy and practice

The Commission is committed to ensuring strategy and policy development, and systems and services planning is underpinned by contemporary, best practice evidence, and is working with tertiary organisations and other stakeholders to facilitate translatable alcohol and other drugs research.

Where appropriate, the Commission partners with researchers and non-government organisations on new state and nationally focused research projects aligned with our strategic priorities. As an example, the Office commissioned an evidence review to inform contemporary understanding of key issues such as stigma and discrimination experienced by people who use alcohol and other drugs, with a focus on opportunities at the system-level. In addition, work was commissioned to support collective understanding of contemporary alcohol and other drug lived and living experience and its application at the service, sector and system levels.

This work is anticipated to support the Office in development of the Alcohol and Other Drugs Framework.



### **Supporting the voices of people with lived and living experience**

The Commission is committed to embedding lived and living experience perspectives throughout our work, recognising community voices are essential in guiding continuous improvement and reform of the systems, services and programs.

As the peak body for alcohol and other drug consumer and community informed systemic advocacy in Western Australia, the Commission transitioned the Alcohol and Other Drug Consumer Community Coalition to a Service Agreement in 2025; providing for a more sustainable service and greater capacity to elevate the voices of people with lived or living experience and to support alcohol and other drugs sector development.

In addition, the Commission extended its agreement with Cyrenian House to continue delivering training aimed at enhancing the capacity of alcohol and other drugs consumers to engage effectively in various consumer engagement activities, such as participation on advisory boards or working groups. Participants who have engaged in the training have reported significant improvements in their ability to engage in consumer activities, with feedback indicating empowerment, inspiration, and increased knowledge.

### **Bolstering illicit drug monitoring and surveillance efforts**

The Commission is focusing efforts to increase capability to monitor and respond to drug-related harm in the Western Australia community through national and statewide programs informed by best practice, research and evaluation, and in collaboration with other government departments, clinicians, consumers, harm reduction service providers and academics.

#### **Prompt Response Network**

The Commission participates in the Prompt Response Network, a national network of experts providing real-time information and knowledge to inform timely public health responses to the harmful effects of drugs. Commission engagement at this level provides timely insight into harmful drugs in circulation, providing foresight and preparation for potential harm risks and responses in Western Australia.

### Emerging Drugs Network of Australia

In November 2024, the Commission funded the East Metropolitan Health Service for the ongoing implementation and expansion of the Western Australian component of the Emerging Drugs Network of Australia (EDNA). The WA EDNA collects and shares localised and emerging drug trend data with other jurisdictions across Australia through the national EDNA network. Funding was also allocated to the development and implementation of a Statewide Toxicology Alert Reporting System to provide timely and accurate advice to clinicians to inform appropriate clinical responses to people experiencing adverse drug reactions.

### Western Australian Early Warning System

The Commission coordinates the WA Early Warning System to respond to incidents or clusters of drug-related harm, including cases related to previously unidentified psychoactive substances. As part of this program of work, the Commission is exploring opportunities to leverage the information attained through the above initiatives to implement proactive, holistic and strategic approaches to reducing drug-related harm through public health programs, policy and regulatory responses in Western Australia.

### Increasing community access to naloxone

The Commission continues to operate the WA Naloxone Program and facilitate access to free naloxone (used to temporarily reverse the effects of opioid overdose) through organisations authorised to supply naloxone as part of the Commonwealth Take Home Naloxone Program.

**In recognition of the life-saving potential of naloxone availability in the community, the Commission has focused considerable effort to address barriers preventing access to free naloxone through the following initiatives:**

- Developed and launched an e-Learning program to facilitate timely completion of mandatory staff training to enable authorised organisations to supply naloxone. The training was informed by advice and feedback from sector experts and stakeholders.
- Collaborated with the Department of Health's Medicines and Poisons Regulation Branch to expand the scope of stakeholders authorised to supply naloxone to include Registered Nurses, Enrolled Nurses, Aboriginal Health Workers and Aboriginal Health Practitioners.

### Influencing legislation and policy to minimise alcohol harm

The Commission has a longstanding partnership with the Department of Health's Chief Health Officer (CHO), using legislation and strategic policy to increase the impact of harm minimisation provisions within the *Liquor Control Act 1988*.

In the reporting period, 108 liquor licence applications were reviewed, resulting in 35 submissions to the licensing authority by the CHO. Submissions largely focused on separating alcohol from activities at licensed venues that appeal to children, reducing risk associated with late night trading, drink limits on mine-sites and limiting the impact of expanded packaged liquor availability in communities experiencing harms.

Of 27 decisions received during this period, the majority (n=24) which primarily sought harm minimisation conditions, were either fully or partially consistent with recommendations made in the submissions.

### Building workforce capacity and capability

The Commission remains committed to building the capacity and capability of workers to support people experiencing alcohol and other drug issues and related harms. Key activities in this reporting period are outlined below.

#### Alcohol and Other Drugs Skill Sets for delivery in Western Australia

Collaboration with Community Skills WA to lead work to develop an Alcohol and Other Drugs Awareness Skill Set that would provide nationally recognised training aimed at supporting the generalist workforce to work more effectively with people experiencing alcohol and other drug related issues. The consultation process identified there was a need for entry level vocational training that would support people working in specialist alcohol and other drug services.

**As a result of the consultation, two separate Skill Sets have now been endorsed for delivery in Western Australia:**

- Alcohol and Other Drugs Awareness, aimed at upskilling the generalist workforce to better understand alcohol and other drug use; and
- Alcohol and Other Drugs (Treatment), which provides entry level training for people providing specialist alcohol and other drug support services.



Alcohol and Other Drugs Careers webpage launched by the Commission in December 2024 to increase awareness of available career pathways and the variety of roles in the sector.

### Education and Training

In addition to the suite of tailored training delivered to alcohol and other drugs, mental health, and human service sectors as part of the Commission's Alcohol and Other Drugs Training Calendar, the Commission is transitioning to online modes of training delivery to support increased reach and uptake, including for regional Western Australia.

As an example, the new *Alcohol and Other Drug Services in Western Australia eLearning package* went live in March 2025. The package provides human services with a comprehensive understanding of alcohol and other drug treatment and support options across the State. This includes an overview of the local alcohol and other drugs sector, with video presentations from specialist service providers in the Perth metropolitan alongside regional Community Alcohol and Other Drugs Services sharing insights into service and referral pathways.

**Participant evaluation demonstrates the value of increasing the awareness of alcohol and other drugs treatment and support options across health and human services:**

“

Very good and informative to learn about all the different alternative options for patients to determine the type of service that would suit them best.

– **Clinical Nurse**

“

It was extremely helpful for me to build my knowledge on the AOD sector and supporting services available to people.

– **Housing Case Manager**

“

I now have vast knowledge of where to get services for AOD and how best to assist them.

– **Peer Support Worker**

“

I found it interesting learning more about the different AOD services and the programs they have to offer.

– **Family and Domestic Violence Counsellor**

“

I didn't realise we had so many harm reduction resources in Perth. Since speaking about this to friends most didn't know either and the ones who did know were nurses and they didn't realise this interested us non-healthcare professionals. But the conversation has started.

– **Pharmacist**

In 2025, the Commission's Strong Spirit Strong Mind Aboriginal Programs team also launched three new culturally secure *Strong Spirit Strong Mind* training packages, which includes an alcohol and other drugs specific package. These initiatives strengthen the capability of the Aboriginal workforce across the alcohol and other drugs and community services sectors. Developed in response to community-identified needs, the training supports culturally appropriate service delivery and contributes to system-wide workforce development that enhances organisational capacity, supports leadership and accountability.

### **Building alcohol and other drugs capability and capacity in Youth Accommodation and Support Services**

Through the Drug Education and Support Services (DESS) in Youth Accommodation Support Services (YASS) Project (Project), the Commission funded DESS workers to provide alcohol and other drug education, individual and group interventions, assessments and outreach services in 17 youth crisis and transitional accommodation services across WA. Workforce development is a core component of the Project to support DESS workers and build the capability of others working in the youth sector.

#### **During this reporting period the Project:**

- provided 29 training events attended by over 300 participants around the State;
- continued to provide tools and resources to connect DESS workers through the Online DESS Worker Portal, including the publication of a new eLearning module on Youth Withdrawal;
- held monthly Communities of Practice for DESS Workers to promote reflective practice; and
- hosted the third annual DESS Worker Conference in February 2025.

### **Lived Experience Peer Support Worker at the Perth Drug Court**

The Commission provides a range of alcohol and/or other drug diversion programs which link individuals and their families to education and treatment while they are in contact with police or courts, and in some circumstances, can be offered as an alternative to criminal penalties.

In December 2024, the Commission funded an 18-month pilot program to integrate a Peer Support Worker into the Perth's Drug Court. The Peer Support Worker supports Drug Court participants and their families to participate in the Drug Court program, develop long term goal-oriented plans, and connect to resources in their community.

# Looking forward

**The Commission will continue to deliver against the Implementation Plan, realising the guiding principles set by the sector regarding the desired future state of alcohol and other drugs governance in Western Australia.**

In addition to driving progress against specific strategies within the Implementation Plan, there are a number of key initiatives intended for progress in 2025/26 that will contribute to addressing critical system gaps, strengthening governance, and providing focus for cross-agency and cross-sector collaboration and partnership to further drive alcohol and other drugs system, policy and services reform.

## **Alcohol and Other Drugs Framework**

The Office will lead the development of an Alcohol and Other Drugs Framework (Framework) which will support the implementation of the Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategy (in-development), guiding future alcohol and other drug related activity.

The Framework development process will include collaboration with a range of stakeholders to support coordinated action to drive strategic policy and services reform to prevent and reduce alcohol and other drug related harms and support community wellbeing.

Based on recent consultation processes, it is anticipated Framework development will provide an opportunity to consider reform opportunities as it relates to priority issues, including but not limited to, system-wide approaches to addressing stigma and discrimination, strategic approaches to workforce development and planning and opportunities to bolster harm reduction services and initiatives.

## **Regulating alcohol and other drug facilities**

In 2025, the State Government committed to introducing regulations for private mental health and alcohol and other drug facilities. This aligns with an action from the Report of the Inquiry into the Esther Foundation and unregulated private health facilities, to consider reforms required for contemporary and effective regulation of private health care facilities and accommodation-based treatment services.

### Bringing additional services online

Work is progressing on the planning for the several new alcohol and other drug services that were committed as part of the 2025–26 State Budget, which will contribute to addressing critical service gaps for regional communities in Western Australia.

#### This includes:

- Establishment of a residential alcohol and other drugs low medical withdrawal and adult treatment service in the Great Southern.
- Establishment of the Derby Wellness Centre, to provide alcohol and other drug, mental health, family and domestic violence support, aged-care and healing services.
- Planning for a future low to medium withdrawal facility in Broome.

In addition, the Commission will continue to work with relevant Health Service Providers and other key stakeholders to operationalise and integrate the 25 alcohol and other drug withdrawal beds at Cockburn Health Facility, to support increased capacity and flow across the system.

### Western Australian workforces study

In collaboration with key stakeholders, the Commission is leading a strategic research initiative to enhance workforce data collection across the alcohol and other drugs and mental health sectors. In June 2025, the Commission appointed a research partner to undertake a Workforces Surveys Scoping Project (the Project). The Project includes engagement with and guidance from sector peaks to inform research specific to each sector's workforce. The research is intended to capture representative data regarding the composition, size and distribution of the alcohol and other

drugs and mental health workforces in Western Australia. To ensure the alcohol and other drugs workforce research is accessible and reflects the settings in which this workforce provides services, this engagement has included consultations with alcohol and drugs sector representatives and peak bodies including the Alcohol and Other Drug Consumer and Community Coalition (AODCCC) and Western Australian Network of Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies (WANADA). It is anticipated that survey findings will help inform appropriate policy, planning and workforce development activities into the future.

### Working together

Preventing and reducing harms from alcohol and other drugs and creating healthy communities is work that does not, and cannot occur in isolation.

Through the work of the Office and the Commission more broadly, there is a strong commitment to walking alongside partners and the community in alignment with our shared goal of making a difference, elevating the importance of collective and coordinated efforts and driving effective, meaningful and person-centred reforms for sustainable outcomes.



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